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More than two billion nickels have been coined by the United States Mint since 1866, Nellie Tayloe Ross, Director of the Mint, pointed out today in conjunction with the observation of National Coin Week and the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the American nickel.

Commenting on the new Jefferson nickel, Mrs. Ross observed that the mints had struck off a total of 453,314,458 of these coins since October 1, 1938. The Director added that the new design has proven popular. She added that production of this same design has continued steadily and rapidly since it was first adopted.

Recounting the history of this coin, it was noted that Congress authorized the production of five-cent nickel pieces on May 16, 1866, and coinage commenced almost immediately. The first nickel was minted in June of 1866 and was known as the Shield Type nickel. The design consisted of a shield on the obverse and a circle of thirteen stars and the numeral "5" on the reverse. During the seventeen years of this coin's production, a total of 128,041,989 such coins were struck off.

In 1883 the first Liberty nickel was produced. This coin had a Liberty Head on the obverse and a "V" on the reverse. This design, with slight modifications, was in use for thirty years, and was struck off 602,083,717 times.

The year 1913 saw the production of the first Buffalo nickel. During the ensuing twenty-five years a total of 1,212,916,248 of these coins was produced by the mints.

In 1938 the United States Mint coined the first Jefferson nickel, and on November 15 of that year 12,700,000 were released to the public. The total of all nickels minted to March 16, 1941, was 2,396,356,412.

Director Ross pointed out that the Shield Type nickel was designed by Mint Engraver J. B. Longacre with the assistance of two other mint employees, William Barber and William H. Key. The Liberty nickel was designed by C. E. Barber. J. E. Fraser was the designer of the Buffalo nickel. Felix Schlag was the winner of a nationwide competition for the design of the Jefferson nickel.

In conjunction with the American Numismatic Association's designation of the week March 23-29 as National Coin Week, Mrs. Ross contrasted the present popularity of the nickel with the disapproving attitude of the public when a nickel five-cent piece was considered by Congress in 1866. Numerous coinage displays in shop windows and other spots easily accessible to the public are being shown throughout the country during this week by numismatists.